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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000048

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: COUNCIL DITHERS AS BASRAH SECURITY WORSENS

REF: A) BASRAH 19, B) BASRAH 17

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CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, REGIONAL COORDINATOR, REO BASRAH,
DEPARTMENT OF STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: On April 3, the Basrah Regional Coordinator (RC) met with Hakim Abdul Sahib Kadum (Independent- Basrah Islamic Coalition), Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) member and Head of the Supervisory Security Committee of the council. He insisted that the U.S. REO take an "active role" in convincing the British to give in to BPC demands for ending the ongoing boycott. The RC delivered the message that the REO would assist in mediation but would not deliver ultimatums to the British on behalf of the BPC. The boycott on the Danish Mission in Basrah continues, and the BPC has to weigh the value of the Danish programs before ending it. Tactical Support Unit (TSU) demonstrations were held on April 2 in Basrah to protest the decision to place the unit under the control of the local Iraqi police. Hakim blamed the worsening security situation in Basrah on the British, but admitted that there were many other factors influencing security. At least 100- possibly 230- families have arrived in Basrah province fleeing sectarian violence in the north. End Summary.

Boycotts Must Be Resolved through Negotiations, Not Ultimatums

12. (C) On April 3, the Basrah RC met with Hakim Abdul Sahib Kadum, BPC member and Head of the Supervisory Security Committee of the council. Hakim has been in contact with the REO over the course of the BPC's boycott of the British and Danish established on February 13 (see Reftel A). His message to the REO on this occasion was a request for the United States to take what he termed a "more active role" in breaking the impasse on the boycott. When pressed to specify what sort of role he envisioned for the United States, he clarified that he wanted the REO to pressure the British to give in to the demands of the BPC (see Reftel B). The RC stressed that the U.S. REO considered it important to end the boycott and would be happy to serve as a mediator in direct negotiations between the British forces and the BPC. However, the RC emphasized that both sides must meet and discuss their differences with each other. Expecting the United States to deliver the council's ultimatums to the British would do nothing to end the impasse and was no substitution for direct negotiations.

13. (C) As for the boycott on cooperation with the Danish Mission in Basrah, Hakim shrugged and said that Denmark transgressed against the Prophet Mohammed, and as such, the

boycott could not be resolved at the provincial level, only at the national level. The RC relayed the information that the Danish Mission would most likely close its office in Basrah within the next month if work with its Iraqi counterparts on the council could not continue. Hakim did not appear overly concerned about the possible pullout of the Danish, saying that the BPC would have to consider the impact that the Danish Mission's pullout would have on project work and vote on whether or not to abandon the boycott on the Danish. He added that the agenda for the council's meeting the next day was already full, so the council would not be able to discuss the Danish until the next meeting.

TSU Demonstrations Over Status

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14. (C) Hakim explained that the Tactical Support Unit (TSU) forces demonstrated in Basrah on April 2 because they opposed the Ministry of Interior's decision to absorb the TSU into an Emergency Battalion with the Disturbance Battalion under the Iraqi Police (IP) in Basrah. Accustomed to operating semi-independently and benefiting from receiving better equipment than most of the rest of the IP, the TSU saw the decision as a demotion in prestige. Hakim said that the Supervisory Security Committee was working on resolving the issue by mediating between the IP and the TSU, and that the TSU had been advised to work through the BPC to air their grievances and not demonstrate in the streets.

Basrah Security Situation Worse for Many Reasons

15. (C) Hakim attributed the worsening security situation in Basrah to several factors: the power vacuum in the national government, the current Chief of Police Hassan Sewadi's incompetence, Iranian interference, British meddling, militias and tribal warfare. He said that until a new government is formed, long-term solutions to the security problems would not be found. He foresaw militia activity continuing to be a

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problem in Basrah through provincial elections, saying that losing parties would take their anger out through their militias. When the RC pushed the security issue, noting that a four-year-old boy had been killed in a drive-by shooting in the central marketplace in Basrah on April 2, Hakim said that it was dangerous everywhere in Iraq and blamed the deteriorating situation in Basrah on the British for not coordinating their moves with Iraqi security.

Internal Displacement Due to Sectarian Violence

16. (C) Hakim estimated that since February about one hundred Shia families had arrived in Basrah province from the north due to sectarian violence (Note: An April 2 International Office for Migration report puts the number of displaced families in Basrah at 230. End Note). He said a committee was investigating the issue of refugee Shia families on April 3 and were registering them. Most of the displaced families originated in the "hot" zones of Fallujah and Ramadi, he said, and were re-settling throughout the province, but in the cities of Basrah and Safwan in particular. He said that the BPC had considered offering special assistance to the families but decided against it out of concern that doing so would attract unmanageable numbers of people. Instead, families were receiving assistance through various humanitarian non-governmental organizations and through the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (Note: Poloff has received reports of Red Crescent delivering food and supplies to displaced families throughout the southern region. End Note). Hakim said that he had no knowledge of Sunni families fleeing Basrah (Comment: Other REO contacts report that "hundreds" of Sunnis are leaving Basrah because of increased violence. End Comment).

Comment

17. (C) Hakim, knowledgeable about specific issues, offered no helpful suggestions as to how to bring the two-month long boycott on the British and Danish to an end. The meeting was an important opportunity, however, to deliver the message to a council member that the REO would mediate negotiations, but that the BPC itself would have to resolve its differences directly with the British and Danish. The dysfunctional BPC, identified by nearly all other REO contacts as contributing to the security problem in Basrah, was glaringly absent from Hakim's list of reasons why security in Basrah was deteriorating. Hakim's defensive stance toward Basrah's security crisis and unworkable strategy for resolving the boycott on Coalition partners in Basrah point in the direction of a further decline in local government performance until the provincial election takes place.
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